

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Report

Committee:	Children and Young People Select Committee
Date:	10 January 2020
Title:	Reshaping Short Break Activities – Progress Update
Report From:	Director of Children’s Services

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Purpose of this Report

1. In July 2018, the Children and Young People Select Committee considered a report from the Director of Children’s Services regarding the reshaping of the Short Break Activities offer as for of the County Council’s Transformation to 2019 (T19) programme. The changes proposed were approved by the Executive Lead Member for Children’s Services at his decision day on 12 July 2018. It was agreed by the Children and Young People Select Committee at their meeting in January 2019 that a further progress report would be given in a years’ time to update on the changes made to the Short Breaks Activities Programme and this report provides such an update.

Recommendation(s)

2. The Children and Young People Select Committee are asked to note the progress, of the implementation of the changes to reshape the Short Break Activities Programme.

Executive Summary

3. This report seeks to update the Children and Young People Select Committee on the changes made to the Short Breaks Activities Programme during T19.

Contextual Information

4. The Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations 2011 bring into effect Paragraph 6(1)(c) of Schedule 2 to the Children Act 1989 (inserted by section 25 of the Children and Young Persons Act 2008), requiring local authorities to provide services to assist individuals who provide care for disabled children to

continue to do so, or to do so more effectively, by giving them breaks from caring.

5. The Short Break Activities Programme seeks to offer a range of fun and educational activities for children and young people with disabilities and additional needs so that their parents or carers can have a short break from their caring responsibilities.

6. **Changes**

The changes to the Short Break Activities Programme that were implemented:

- To commission the Short Break Activities Programme on the basis of priorities agreed with a representative parent/carer panel
- To require parents and carers to pay in advance for Short Break Activities, and for providers to collect advance payment of parents'/carers' contributions for those activities
- To require providers of Short Break Activities to apply consistent parental/carer charges and hardship rates. A charging policy setting out the consistent parent/carer contributions and hardship rates formed part of the approval and has been published
- To move to a new online Gateway Card application system
- To require evidence of eligibility from a professional as part of the new Gateway Card application to access the Short Break Activities Programme
- From 1 April 2019, to stop funding Short Break Activities for young people aged 18 and over
- That Short Break Activities would only be funded for children who live in the Hampshire County Council authority area
- To only fund Short Break Activities which allow parents and carers to leave their child
- To stop funding swimming lessons as a short break activity

Six Month Short Breaks Grant Round

7. Following approval to implement the changes to the Short Break Activities programme, an initial six-month grant round was approved allowing for officers to fully develop a priority led approach to the future commissioning of short breaks. This shorter grant round funded short break activities from 1 April 2019-30 September 2019. This interim funding period allowed time for further consultation and planning on defining future key funding priorities.

8. The six-month grant round also covered the critical summer holiday period for Short Break providers meaning that access to services were not compromised for parents and carers.
9. A Short Break Activities provider forum was held on 04 February 2019 which all funded Short Break activity providers were invited to participate, there were sixteen providers in attendance from thirteen different organisations. The purpose of this provider forum was to update Providers on the commencement of the interim six-month grant period beginning on 01 April 2019.
10. Officers sought feedback from providers on the upcoming eighteen-month grant and the new commissioning strategy. This strategy proposed to target specific provision for each district based on the location of the gateway card holding population in that district.

Providers were asked to feedback on a range of options including;

- highlighting known gaps in provision/needs in the area they worked in,
- activity frequency,
- when and where activities should be held,
- staffing ratios and;
- frequency

Alongside this providers were given a first look at the potential commissioning timeline for grant funding beginning on the 01 October 2019.

Commissioning Strategy

11. A further report was taken to the Executive Lead Member for Children's Services to seek approval on the Commissioning Strategy for Short Break Activities for the period from 1 October 2019 – 31 March 2021. The strategy included the three commissioning priorities, the proposed district provision and the eighteen-month grant period. The report was approved at Decision Day on the 08 May 2019.

Further information on the Commissioning Strategy can be found on the link below:

<http://democracy.hants.gov.uk/documents/s33273/Report.pdf>

12. A second provider forum was held on 07 May 2019, thirteen Short Breaks providers attended the forum from eleven different organisations. This session detailed the new Gateway Card system, specifically the provider scanning element, concessions policy, the draft commissioning strategy and priorities.

13. In the approved commissioning strategy, a set of priorities informed by stakeholders were agreed:
 - Activities that take place during school holidays
 - Activities that take place at the weekend
 - Youth Club Activities

14. Alongside this, stakeholders defined the optimum time that each of the prioritised activities should last for:
 - School Holidays Full Day – six hours
 - Weekend Club Full Day – six hours
 - Youth Club – two hours

15. By focusing on these priorities and moving to an eighteen-month grant round, it meant that a viable countywide offer could be commissioned within the funding available.

16. The eighteen-month grant round was approved in the 10 July 2019 Executive Lead Member for Children’s Services and Young People Decision Day. This grant round sought to give providers more stability financially and for staff members, as well as continuous provision for the children and young people accessing the activities.
<http://democracy.hants.gov.uk/documents/s36055/Report.pdf>

17. The grant funding period began 01 October 2019 and will finish on 31 March 2021. Twenty-two grants were awarded to separate providers whose applications met the key priorities; activities that take place during school holidays, activities that take place during the weekend and youth club activities. The total value of grant funding awarded was £1,327,507.52.

18. The number of applications for both Havant and Basingstoke were low. This led to a further targeted grant round being held in July 2019 to ensure there was adequate provision in both areas as there is a high density of Gateway Card holders in these districts. These grants were approved by delegated authority by the Director of Children’s Services and the Executive Lead Member for Children’s Services and Young People.

Exception Funding

19. A separate funding allocation has been set aside to fund applications which do not meet the key defined priorities but will still meet the Short Break Activities criteria. This Exceptions fund will run alongside the main grants that were approved at the Executive Lead Member Decision Day on the 10 July

2019. To date three grant providers have been awarded this funding and the grant round will remain open until November 2020 or until there is no longer any grant funding available.

Parent/Carer and Provider Survey

20. In March 2019 a survey was sent out to parents/carers of gateway card holding children and young people, Disabled Children's Teams and providers to seek further clarification on which school holidays are most important, the frequency, location and duration, when Short Break Activities should be held. The result of the survey informed the priorities that Short Break Activities would be commissioned against. The priorities that were defined in the survey were:

- Activities that take place during school holidays
- Activities that take place at the weekend
- Youth Club Activities

Implementation

21. Changes for Providers (to be implemented by Providers):

A number of the changes related to policy changes which needed to be applied by service providers, or activities that will not be funded from April 2019. This was the case for:

- Change 2: Parents and carers are required to pay in advance for Short Break Activities, providers must collect advance payment of parents'/carers' contributions for those activities;
- Change 3: Providers of Short Break Activities must apply consistent parental/carers charges and hardship rates;
- Change 6: From 1 April 2019, Short Break Activities will no longer be funded for young people aged 18 and over;
- Change 7: Short Break Activities will only be funded for children who live in the Hampshire County Council authority area;
- Change 8: Only Short Break Activities which allow parents and carers to leave their child will be funded;
- Change 9: Swimming lessons will no longer be funded as a short break activity.

22. For these changes, communications through Hampshire Parent Carer Network, provider forums and letters were issued, alongside clearly published advice on the Short Breaks website. All affected families (particularly in relation to cessation of funding at age 18 and cessation of funding for children

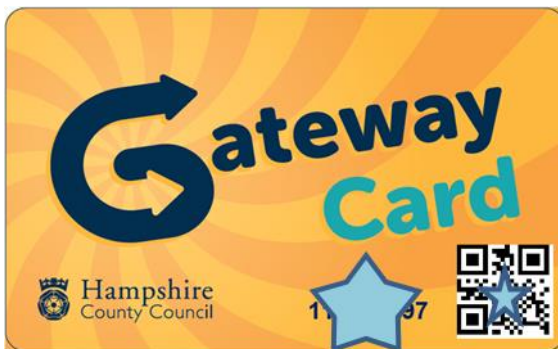
who live outside of the Hampshire area) were contacted to ensure they were aware of the changes.

23. In relation to Change 3 (to require providers of Short Break Activities to apply consistent parental/carer charges and hardship rates), a policy was developed, approved and shared with providers as well as published on the Short Breaks website.

24. Changes 4 and 5: To move to a new online Gateway Card application system and to require evidence of eligibility from a professional as part of the new Gateway Card application to access the Short Break Activities Programme

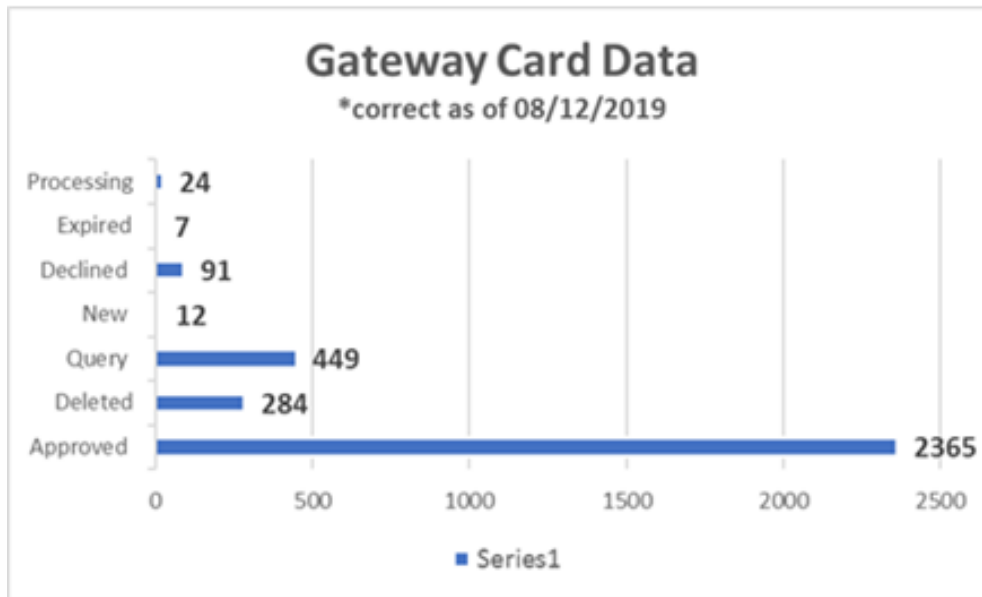
In April 2019 the Contracts and Grants Team implemented the new gateway card. All applications are now received electronically via an online form and evidence is attached to their application or, sent in the post to the Contracts and Grants team. The new gateway card is then emailed to the parent/carer electronically. Paper application forms are no longer accepted. However, where a family does not have access to a computer, families are able to use facilities in Hampshire Libraries or are supported by the team to apply at Hampshire County Council offices.

25. The new system means that the old physical cards are no longer valid when families and carers book on to Short Break activities. Instead, parents and carers would need to present their digital gateway card when attending the activity so it could either be scanned on entry or the card number manually inputted after the session has been completed.

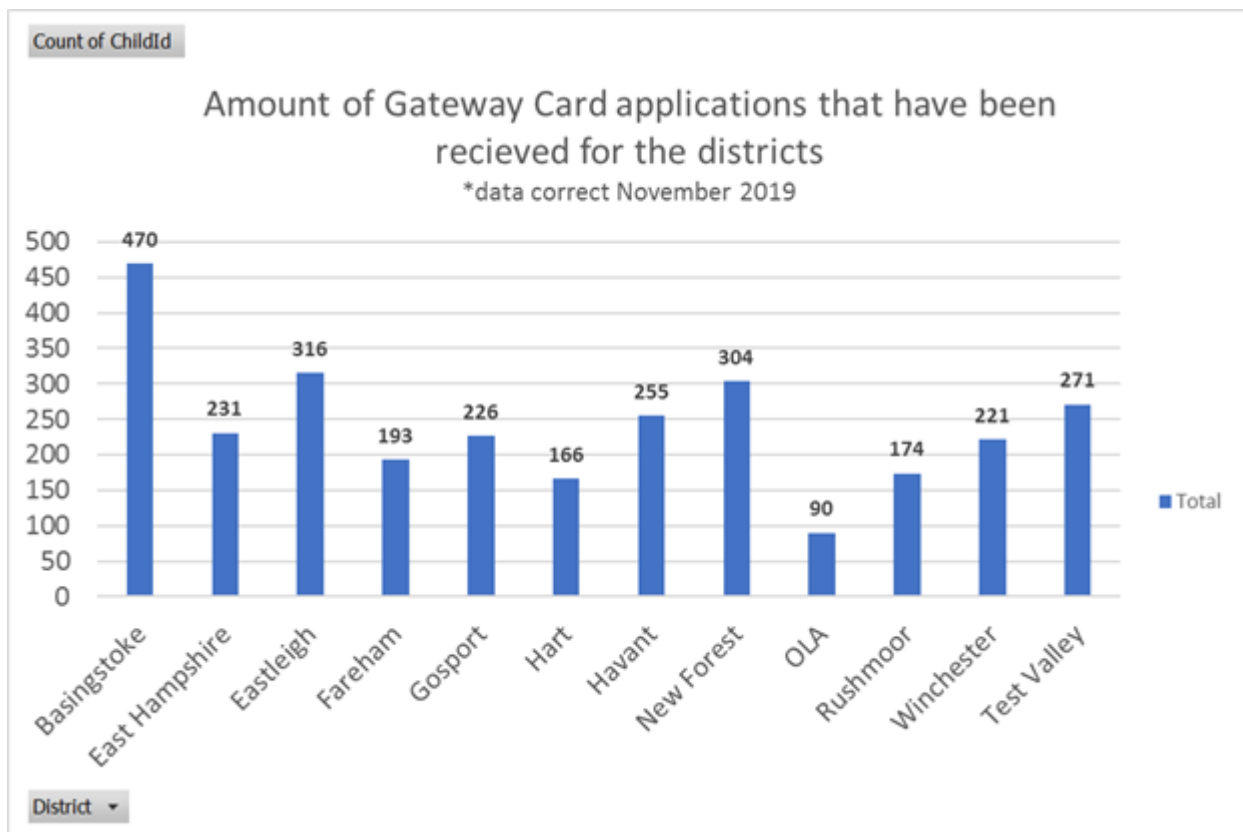


26. The new Gateway Cards contain a 'QR Code' (a form of barcode) as well as a long card number that is linked to the individual Gateway Card holder this can either be scanned or inputted manually and will capture regular and accurate data on attendance at activities.

27. The graph below highlights how the card applications have been processed:



28. Applications that are marked as query will still be waiting for a parent or carer to send through a piece of evidence or supply further evidence to support their application. Applications that have been declined will be predominately from families and carers that live outside the Hampshire County Council area. If the application has expired, then the young person will have reached their eighteenth birthday and will no longer be eligible for Short Break Activities.
29. Gateway card holders will be asked to reconfirm their details every 12 months through an automated reminder in the new gateway card system. The first tranche of gateway card holders who received their cards in November 2018 will be asked to reapply in April 2020. The date was pushed back to accommodate the updates to the gateway card IT system.
30. The new gateway cards are time limited and expire after three years, at which point a new, full re-application would need to be made and evidence of eligibility provided again.
31. The table below details where in the county the applications have been received from including those applications that have come from outside of the county (OLA).



32. 88% of Short Break funded providers are either scanning cards or inputting the card numbers manually. All providers have been reminded of the specific grant condition around inputting gateway cards numbers and those that do not adhere to this will be worked with on an individual basis.
33. To date the Contracts and Grants Team have not had any major issues with the implementation of the new Gateway Card system and the day to day running of issuing the cards.
34. Parents and carers have welcomed the new digital card as it gives them greater ownership over it. There is now a 48 hour (or less) turn around on issuing the cards if the application is complete, whereas with the old system parents and carers may have been waiting a month to receive the physical card. The team have also found that administering the system is a lot more efficient and time spent on sending cards out and contacting parents and carers greatly reduced. The service on the whole has become a lot more efficient and receptive to parents and carers needs.

Updates on workstreams that include Short Breaks

35. The new search filter for the Family Information Services Hub (FISH) to enable parents/carers to search on 'gateway card has now been

implemented. Providers will be notified of the change in the new year and will be accessed to update their listings accordingly. The update will mean that parents and carers can effectively search the FISH website for specific Short Break activities.

36. The second phase of the gateway card system is currently in development. This update will firstly allow Officers to access specific data relating to gateway card usage across the county. It is hoped that this data will feed into future commissioning strategies to help shape a targeted Short Breaks offer.
37. A parent portal is also being developed in which parents will be able to log into their gateway card account. This will mean parents will be able to self-serve when it comes to renewing their gateway cards, reapplying and re-sending themselves their gateway card.

Swimming

38. Since the implementation of the change to no longer fund swimming through Short Breaks grant funding, the Contracts and Grants Team have received a small volume of enquiries from both parents/carers and providers.
39. When speaking to both providers, parents and carers it is apparent that providers are still providing lessons for children and young people.

Buddy Scheme

40. The Buddy Scheme is centrally co-ordinated by Rose Road who are grant funded by the Short Breaks Activities Programme. The scheme is accessible to children and young people who are aged between seven and seventeen (up until their eighteenth birthday) who have a disability and/or additional need.
41. The Buddy Scheme pairs children and young people with a Community Buddy who will help that child or young person access the community. They may accompany the child or young person to a leisure activity, help them access a chosen activity they can do away from home or support them to access the community. Parents pay an hourly cost for the Buddy of £5 plus the cost the activity and travel and they can be used after-school, at weekends or during school holidays.
42. The County Council has been working with Rose Road, to explore ways to address the issues of capacity and responsiveness of the service. The following recommendations are being implemented:

- Introducing a minimum notice period;
- Introducing a requirement for regular hours to be utilised;
- Clarification of appropriate referrals to be provided for professionals;
- Simple contract for parents to be introduced to outline expectations;
- Service scope to be clarified via service literature and communications to better manage parent/carer expectations;
- Pre-payment to be explored where appropriate;
- Group outings to be explored to promote social outcomes and make better use of staff.

Conclusions

43. The commissioning priorities are now implemented fully in the eighteen-month grant round.
44. The Exception Fund grant will run until November 2020 or until all the funds have been allocated.
45. The Gateway Card system is now fully up and running and being utilised by the Contracts and Grants Team
46. The second phase of the Gateway Card system is underway, the timeline for completion will be spring/early summer 2020.
47. The Gateway Card tick box on the FISH website has been implemented and should be in full use from the beginning of 2020.
48. Gateway Card scanning uptake from providers has gone very well and nearly all providers have been very receptive to this change.

REQUIRED CORPORATE AND LEGAL INFORMATION:

Links to the Strategic Plan

Hampshire maintains strong and sustainable economic growth and prosperity:	yes
People in Hampshire live safe, healthy and independent lives:	yes
People in Hampshire enjoy a rich and diverse environment:	yes
People in Hampshire enjoy being part of strong, inclusive communities:	yes

Other Significant Links

Links to previous Member decisions:	
<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>
Proposed changes to the Short Break Activities Programme and Consultation Outcomes	12 July 2018
Full Council: Medium Term Financial Strategy Update and Transformation to 2019 Savings Proposals	02 November 2017
Short Breaks for Disabled Children – Grants for 2019-20	17 January 2019
Reshaping Short Break Activities – Progress Update	17 January 2019
Short Break Activities Commissioning Strategy	08 May 2019
Short Breaks Activities Grant 2019-2021	10 July 2019
Direct links to specific legislation or Government Directives	
<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>
Children Act	1989
Short Breaks: Statutory guidance on to safeguard and promote the welfare of disabled children using short breaks	2010
Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations	2011
Short Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children: Departmental Advice for Local Authorities	2011

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

<u>Document</u>	<u>Location</u>
None	

EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT:

1. Equality Duty

The County Council has a duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') to have due regard in the exercise of its functions to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by or under the Act with regard to the protected characteristics as set out in section 4 of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation);
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (see above) and persons who do not share it.

Due regard in this context involves having due regard in particular to:

- The need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- Encourage persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

2. Equalities Impact Assessment:

This report is an information update for the Children and Young People Select Committee and therefore no impact has been identified'